

**A FOCUS GROUP STUDY ON LOCAL LANGUAGE
COMPUTING IN SMES'**

By

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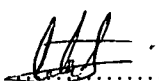
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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are regarded as a powerful tool for gaining competitive advantage in any industry. Even though our population has high literacy level, many Sri Lankans are not fully-fledged computer users. Therefore the advantages of using these technologies are limited to a privileged few. Although most ICT related products and services are based on English language, the majority of the society who would benefit from these technologies is not English conversant.

This is a principal reason behind the digital divide in society where some social groups lack access to ICT. One social group that does not use computers and internet are individuals and organizations that can afford them but lack English language knowledge and also lack awareness of available local language ICTs.

The objective of this research is to find out whether the ICT penetration level in the country may be increased using local language ICT.

As the first part of the research we conducted a survey of the current state of Sinhala language computer applications in Sri Lanka. We have identified the major local language application vendors, and their products. We also obtained the views of the vendors on the issues facing the industry.

In the second part of the research, we surveyed the use of local language computing by a number of small and medium-scale industries (SMEs) outside Colombo in several sectors. We also obtained their views on the obstacles to the greater use of LLC.

We then analyzed whether the lack of local language computing products is an obstacle to the greater use of ICTs in this country.

Based on these surveys, we conducted a SWOT analysis and derived recommendations for strategies to be taken to improve local language computing in the country.



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ABBREVIATIONS

CANLIT	-	Committee on Adaptation of National Languages in IT
CINTEC	-	Computer and Information Technology Council
EU	-	European Union
FOSS	-	Free and Opens Source Software
I18N	-	Internationalization
ICT	-	Information and Communication Technology
ICTA	-	Information and Communication Technology Agency
L18N	-	Localization
LLC	-	Local Language Computing
MSN	-	Microsoft Network
NARESA	-	Natural Resources, Energy and Science Authority
OS	-	Operating System
PDA	-	Personal Digital Assistant
POS	-	Point of Sale
SME	-	Small and Medium Enterprises
SWOT	-	Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
UCSC	-	University of Colombo School of Computing
WTO	-	World Trade Organization



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